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The Concept of Love for Knowledge and Excellent Muslims in Transforming Human Capital: An Analysis on Gender Differences

(Konsep Cinta kepada Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Transformasi Kecemerlangan Modal Insan Muslim: Analisis dari aspek Perbezaan Gender)

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the gender differences among Muslims' university students in the aspect of Love for Knowledge, the characteristics of Excellent Muslims and Transformation of Human Capital based on a sample of 600 university students surveyed in Malaysia. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data for the study were collected by using structured questionnaire. Inferential statistics of t-test was used to analyze data on gender differences. The findings revealed that there were no gender differences exist between male and female on the features of Love for Knowledge, Characteristics of Excellent Muslims and Transformation of Human Capital. The paper discussed implications of these results on the importance of acquisition of knowledge in order to develop excellent young Muslims and transforming the human capital.

Keywords: love for knowledge; Muslim youth; excellent; transformation

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti perbezaan jantina dalam kalangan mahasiswa Muslim universiti daripada aspek Cinta kepada Ilmu, Ciri-ciri Muslim Cemerlang dan Transformasi Modal Insan berdasarkan sampel daripada 600 orang pelajar universiti di Malaysia. Sampel dipilih menggunakan kaedah persampelan bertujuan. Data untuk kajian dikumpul dengan menggunakan kaedah soal selidik berstruktur. Statistik inferensi ujian-t digunakan untuk analisis data mengenai perbezaan jantina. Hasil kajian mendapati tidak terdapat perbezaan jantina di antara responden lelaki dan perempuan dengan Ciri-ciri Pencinta Ilmu, Ciri-ciri Muslim Cemerlang dan Transformasi Modal Insan. Artikel ini membincangkan kepentingan mendalami ilmu pengetahuan untuk membangunkan mahasiswa Islam yang cemerlang dan dapat mentransformasikan modal insan.

Kata kunci: Cinta kepada Ilmu; remaja Muslim; cemerlang; transformasi

INTRODUCTION

Islam's deep urge for knowledge has been proven through the elevation of scholars and writers, sophisticated book industry and libraries that flourished in the Muslim world within two centuries after the death of the Prophet (PBUH). Even, the first revelation that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received emphasis on the importance of knowledge. Knowledge is very important in individual's life because it is the fundamental to the development of human capital and the establishment of civilization in society. Developed countries began with the culture of love for knowledge. They propelled the national education plan so that the knowledge can be gained by society in various fields. At the end, it can empower and develop human resources based on knowledge. History has proven that the Islamic Countries had reached a high level of civilization through the culture of love for knowledge such as the golden age of Islam in Damascus, Cordova and Egypt.

This clearly indicates the love for knowledge among Muslims. The duties of transforming a nation to be a developed nation rely heavily on the love of knowledge and its proper use. Therefore, Islam views learning or acquiring knowledge as a kind of worship and highly valued. The literature review shows research on love and culture of knowledge from Islamic perspectives is profound. There are only few studies that examine the concept of love from an Islamic perspective. In addition, the development of instruments on love of knowledge is very limited in scientific study. Thus, the researchers took the initiative to build a love of knowledge and excellence instrument to measure the level of culture of knowledge within individual. The validity of these instruments can be seized and made improvements in various aspects.

Thus, the objective of this study is to identify the characteristics of the love of knowledge that can enhance excellence among the Muslims youth in Malaysia, as well as to determine the relationship between knowledge

lovers, the characteristics of excellence Muslims and transformation of human capital.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on love covers various aspects of human life; individual, community, and divine (Suzana 2001, 2011; Umi Nadzrah 2012; Azizi & Asiah 2007; Syaidatun 2004, 2013; Robiah 1997, 2001). Although the concept of love has been explored from various perspectives, it is somewhat limited to human relations. Concepts such as love of knowledge is relevant but should be emphasized that serious. Respect science literature shows that the love of knowledge among Malaysians dwindling. Studies conducted by the National Library showed a reading culture among Malaysians is less, which is on average Malaysians read only two books a year based on the study in 1996 and 2005. In the survey by Malaysian National Library (2006) it was found that the literacy rate has slightly decreased to 92% from 93% in 1996. The study also revealed that many Malaysians is knowledgeable but do not implement the knowledge they learned.

For students in higher education institutions, the purpose of learning is only to get a job (Zaini 2009). The "love for knowledge" should be inculcated among Malaysians, especially the Muslim youth to achieve excellence. Poor knowledge is the main factor that contributes to the backwardness in science and moral decline among the younger generation.

Graduates of the 21st century are required to be multidisciplinary, acting such as computers, capable of managing knowledge, literacy to new media, smart and proficient to think as well as obtaining soft skills such as social intelligence, sensitive, cross-cultural skills, open minded and capable of engaging with virtual collaboration. These skills are needed to rival changes in industry and the world society as a result of industrial dependence and service system to smart machines and robots known as 4.0 industrial revolution (Syed Lamsah 2017).

LOVE FOR KNOWLEDGE

Humans by nature have an inner drive to learn in order to achieve the satisfaction of curiosity and want to understand, appreciate nature and themselves through a reflective process. The learning process involves all enterprises, whether formal or informal setting to get information and skills. The habit of reading books is the main catalyst for the love of learning and innovative attitude (Mason 2009). Lovers of knowledge have positive feelings for learning new things, being able to self-regulatory and survive when having problems.

Quran always recommends writing (Quran 68: 1-2), the scientific adventure (Quran 88: 17-20) and using questions to generate critical thinking (Syaidatun et al. 2011) as in the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Quran 6: 75-78).

Quranic urge in seeking knowledge is enhance through the encouragement and motivation of the Prophet to the believers which the promised of reward from Allah. Islam emphasized the importance of knowledge of the world and hereafter. Useful knowledge can be *jariah* or continuously deeds to a believer after his death and the quest for knowledge was later included as a jihad in the path of God (Syaidatun et al. 2011).

The love for knowledge can be measured based on the motivation, competencies, values and potentials that one's develop (Peterson & Seligman 2004). Past researches support gender differences in specific cognitive abilities: some support females while others support males. Studies also show no significance differences between genders. Surveys conducted on 856 college students by Brouse et al. (2010) using the Academic Motivation Scales specifically indicates that females scored higher than males on all measures of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation supporting past research by Ryan & Deci (2000). As a result, they suggested that males may require tailored efforts to reduce their divergence in academic motivation.

Habibollah et al. (2010) from the research conducted on 153 Iranian undergraduate students in Malaysian Universities reported there were no significance between males and females in intelligence and academic achievement but the result shows males' means are higher than females. This results supported the study by Najib et al. (2010) on emotional intelligence of 3101 final year students from 10 public universities in Malaysia. They found there was no gender significant difference in their measured intelligence.

Research on ICT competency by Teck et al. (2011) stated that statistically both genders do not have significant gender differences except the difference in PC maintenance competency where the male students scored higher degree of competency compared to their female counterparts. The male students have higher mean score in all the ICT competencies except the word processing competency. The fact that females are better typist and tend to use more word processing applications might be the reason of it.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENT MUSLIMS

In Islam, an excellent Muslim refers to *al-Muflihun*, which originated from the Arabic word *al-Falah*. In the context of excellence it points to the work done in the world and the results will be obtained in the hereafter. Excellent believers are those who justify God and His messenger, recognizes what comes to them from God and are called to practice what they had been taught of (al-Tabari n.d.).

TRANSFORMATION OF HUMAN CAPITAL

Poor education has been identified as one of the risk factors that drive youth involvement into many social problems (Azyyati & Fariza 2016). High school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed, involve in crime and incarceration

which cost a lot of dollars in crime-related expenses. Those who are low in education has poor reasoning skills. Education thus improves decision-making ability and reasoning skills, the ability to gather information, identify choices, and consider the consequences of actions.

Human capital development should be continued to produce competent and professional labor within the country. The human capital required not only in terms of knowledge but also morals as recommended in the Strategic Plan of Higher Education that needs human capital with the first class mind (Norasmah 2017).

Thus, understanding the level of love for knowledge and the characteristics of excellent Muslim among youth is important in transforming the human capital which contributes to the religion, social and economic benefits of the society.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS

A quantitative survey was conducted from June to September 2015 which involved a total of 600 university students aged 17 years and over who represent the students of Research Universities, Public Universities and Private Universities. These students were between 17-33 years old of age ($M \text{ age} = 22.28$, $SD = 1.80$). Descriptive analysis of the respondents reported that there are 143 male respondents which constitute 23.8% from total sample and the rest (457) are the female students which accounts for the majority of the respondents (76.2%).

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the respondents in terms of their demographic information. The table indicates that there were many female respondents which are 76% as compared to male respondents which are only 24%. It also shows that 56% of respondents were between the ages of 21-23 whereas 2% of them aged 31-33, 4% aged 27-30, and 35% are aged 17-20, and 9% of them aged 24-26. Therefore, based on the analysis of the information gained from the questionnaire, it can be concluded that majority of the students were undergraduate students.

PROCEDURES

The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique of undergraduate students from three universities categorized as public universities, private universities and research universities. This study involved students from different gender and field of study. Samples taken are based on the student population in the Klang Valley. Prior to the survey date; the researcher administered the questionnaire personally to all the respondents. According to Dyer et al. (1995) the direct administration method can ensure a high rate of response and the researcher has the opportunity to personally attend to any inquiries that the respondents may have while answering the questionnaires. The researcher is also able to standardize the instructions given thus reduce

TABLE 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	143	23.8
	Female	457	76.2
	Total	100	100.0
Age	17-20	209	34.8
	21-23	333	55.5
	24-26	52	8.7
	27-30	4	0.7
	31-33	2	0.3
	Total	600	100.0
Categories of University	Research University		
	UKM	100	16.7
	UPM	100	16.7
	Public University		
	UIAM	100	16.7
	UPNM	100	16.7
	Private University		
	UniSEL	100	16.7
	UniKL	100	16.7
	Total	600	100.0

interviewer bias. In addition, each part of the questionnaire was accompanied by a detailed explanation regarding the nature and purpose of the survey.

Specific instructions were given by the researcher requiring the respondents to answer all the questions as honest as possible. The respondents were required to fill in some demographic information. However, respondents were not required to write their names on any paper. This is to ensure the anonymity of respondents. The researcher specially emphasized that respondents will not be identified in any presentation, discussion, or publication of the survey findings. Most of the questionnaires were collected on the same day as it only took about 20 to 30 minutes to answer. Scores for each scale were summed (negatively worded items were reverse scored). Missing data were addressed by replacing missing values with series means, where needed.

INSTRUMENTATIONS AND MEASUREMENTS

Preliminary study conducted qualitatively has been collected using document analysis on the references from the Quran and hadith, books, academic writing, journals, articles, newspapers, or internet. After that, the items of the interview questions were developed based on research objectives and analyzed using a thematic approach. Questionnaire was constructed based on the definition of constructs and sub-construct from the analysis theory and concepts through literature review and analysis of the interview data.

In this study, Characteristics of Knowledge Lovers, Muslim Excellent Instrument, and Transformation of

Human Capital Instrument was used to measure the level of love for knowledge. This instrument consists of 73 items. The number of items for each sub-constructs is Love of Reading (4 items), Love of Writing (3 items), Love of Discussion and Thinking (8 items), Love for Truth and Justice (5 items), Love of Motivation (Intrinsic) (4 items), Love of Motivation (Extrinsic) (4 items), Worship (6 items), Personality / Morals (8 items), Aspects of Leadership (6 items), Time Management (5 items), Culturing knowledge (3 items), Aspects of Spirituality (6 items), Identity (4 items) and Soft skills / Generic (7 items). This constructs used 5-point likert scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree".

In this study, researchers conducted a factor analysis for the dimensions of characteristic of knowledge lovers, features of outstanding Muslim and human capital transformation through love for knowledge. Items with high load on one factor identified as genuine items and items that fit simultaneously on two or more factor is known as complex items (Ibrahim 2007; Tabachnick & Fidell 2001). For exploratory purposes, this study using principal component orthogonal with the varimax rotation. Varimax rotation was chosen because it can reduce the number of complex factors by increasing the variance loaded on one factor (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001).

Based on a pilot study conducted among 302 university students from UTM, UniKL and USIM, the reliability and internal consistency for the three instruments were high (Characteristics of Knowledge Lovers: 0.91, Excellent Muslim Instrument: 0.91, and Human Capital Transformation of Human Capital Instrument: 0.96).

DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative method was used to answer the research questions and correlational research design was considered suitable for this study. The study also made use of descriptive statistic to give clear picture of the population. Lastly, Thus, the objective of this study was to identify the characteristics of the love of knowledge that can enhance excellence among the youth of Islam in Malaysia, the relationship between knowledge and excellence. Pearson correlation analysis was used to identify the relationship between the three main constructs used in this study, namely, the characteristics of lovers of knowledge, Muslim excellent characteristics and also the transformation of human capital. Data were analyzed statistically using correlations, means and percentage.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

INFERENTIAL STATISTICS

T-test was used to analyze the differences in mean scores in the six domains of Love for Knowledge by gender. The results as shown in Table 2 revealed that all six domains of lovers did not show any significant differences for both male and female respondents. [$t(600) -0.588, p > 0.05$].

The results of t-test for test of differences based on gender and Characteristics of Excellent Muslims displayed in Table 3. The t-test analysis as shown in Table 3 revealed that all four Muslim Excellent domains did not show any significant differences exist [$t(600) = -1.168, p > 0.05$].

TABLE 2. t-Test results comparing males and females on love for knowledge

Domain	Male (n = 143)		Female (n = 457)		t	P
	Mean	SP	Mean	SP		
Love of Reading	3.97	0.60	3.94	0.59	0.554	0.580
Love of Writing	3.38	0.74	3.46	0.67	-1.131	0.259
Love of Discussion	3.72	0.72	3.73	0.60	-0.143	0.887
Love of Truth	4.11	0.50	4.12	0.46	-0.210	0.834
Love of Motivation (Intrinsic)	4.03	0.64	4.03	0.56	0.059	0.953
Love of Motivation (Extrinsic)	4.16	0.58	4.25	0.47	-1.630	0.105

*Significant at $p > 0.05$

TABLE 3. t-Test results comparing males and females on characteristic of excellent Muslims

Domain	Male (n = 143)		Female (n = 457)		t	P
	Mean	SP	Mean	SP		
Worship	3.70	0.74	3.80	0.57	-1.490	0.138
Manners	4.16	0.60	4.23	0.51	-1.450	0.147
Self-Leadership	4.50	0.54	4.55	0.45	-1.132	0.258
Time Management	3.79	0.80	3.80	0.64	-0.128	0.898

*Significant at $p > 0.05$

T-test was used to analyze the differences in mean scores in the two domains of Transformation of Human Capital based on gender. The results as shown in Table 4 revealed that all two domains of transformation of human capital did not show any significant differences for both male and female respondents. [$t(600) = -0.276, p > 0.05$].

DISCUSSION

Male and female were said to be differ in term of their desire in acquisition of knowledge. This article aims to investigate the differences of love for knowledge between male and female. Result show that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents on the levels of love for knowledge. The results indicates no significant differences between genders in relation to the levels of love for knowledge exhibit that the love for knowledge, the traits of excellent muslims and the transformation of human capital does not matter for males and females. The findings of the study hence propagate the idea from the results of previous researches related to respondents' intelligence and academic achievement (Habibollah et al. 2010), ICT competency (Teck et al. 2011) and emotional intelligence (Marzuki et al. 2012).

Islam as a universal religion has the concept of excellent human capital as a guide. Human capital concept from the perspective of Islam is an individual who equally balanced his/her life between the duty as a servant of God and the Caliph (Khalijah Mohd Salleh 2011) to produce a balanced human capital deprived knowledge. Therefore, inculcating the apply of love for knowledge among the younger generation is very important. Studies Azyyati and Fariza (2016) on adolescent risk have proven that teenagers who do not continue their schooling were at risk of being involved in activities that violate social morals and manners of Islam.

In the Malaysian context, strengthening the culture of love for knowledge has been made strategically through the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) and the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Secondary Education) (Report of the National Education Blueprint 2015). Through a systematic plan, human capital produced can be more focused to achieve the characteristics of excellent Muslim. Excellent Muslims also have the characteristics of *al-Mukminun* such as piety, devoted and do good deeds (Fariza et al. 2013). The combination of the criteria of *al-Muflihun* and *al-Mukminun* create a balanced human capital.

TABLE 4. t-Test results comparing males and females on transformation of human capital through love for knowledge

Domain	Male (n = 143)		Female (n = 457)		t	P
	Mean	SP	Mean	SP		
Cultivation of Knowledge	4.17	0.59	4.21	0.54	-0.803	0.423
Identity	4.21	0.62	4.20	0.58	0.244	0.807

*Significant at $p > 0.05$

The most important aspects in the process of developing knowledge (Nik Mustapha 2000) and the traits of excellent Muslims is to inculcate the Islamic values by equipping man with comprehensive knowledge and understanding about Islam, foster close relationship with Allah through spiritual exercises such as performing obligatory rituals and improve their practice of commendable rituals. Human beings have the innate capacity to worship to the God and obey the commands of God (Nursi 2003). These all are reflected in a person's behavior, attitude and feeling. Additionally, prophets are absolute guidance and model to Muslim individuals. It is an understanding of a person how she/he is able to reflect the characteristics of Prophets in her/his behaviors (Nik Ahmad & Mustaffa 2015). As a result of good culture adopted, an individual can enhance his human values much easier.

Love for Allah is the highest ranking of love for Muslims that promotes the development of good intentions and practices in human behaviour and personality. Islam as a religion, gives immense importance towards learning and

seeking knowledge. Therefore it is important to emphasise on the obligation and responsibility of every Muslims toward seeking, using and preaching their knowledge for the betterment of the ummah (Ramlee & Basri 2008).

At present, there is a need for an Islamic related instrument capable of capturing the major elements of the Islamic personality, love of knowledge and the culture of the knowledge itself. This requires the developers of this instrument to begin with an organic definition of excellent Muslims, love and knowledge from the Islamic perspectives. Further research is needed to verify the nature of this relationship using other measures in order to establish if similar findings hold in other settings and contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The activities that incorporate the culture of love for knowledge such as talks, forums, workshops, volunteerism, trainings, soft-skills, leaderships, communicational and

social activities should be emphasized. Although some of these activities have been utilized by the university authorities, it should be done thoroughly in a way that tell the students the importance of knowledge in everyday life.

Lectures also play an important role to engage with students in class activities and learning by providing an interesting teaching aids, as well as involving all of students in learning activities such as reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking in the class through active engagement in social interaction with others.

It will need a total paradigm conversion in the university administration to shift from academic excellence to overall excellence though it will produce an overall quality graduates with both intelligently and professionally success. Universities can also produce human capital and ideal graduates who have the skills to think, argue, communicate in various dimensions and perspectives, has a good personality as well as capable in search of knowledge and the presentation of it.

CONCLUSION

It should also be noted that the current study was conducted among the Malay youth who studied at six respective universities which are located in Klang Valley, amongst the most densely populated and urban areas in Malaysia. The Malay Muslim population comprises approximately 63.1% of 28.1 million of Malaysian population, far less than many other Muslim countries such as those in the Middle East or even the neighboring country, Indonesia (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2010). Thus, the findings of this article can be only presented the urban Malay youth population in the urban settings.

Malaysia is not as homogeneous as many other Muslim countries in terms of religious practice, culture, and social norms. Although Islam is the official religion in Malaysia, the country is also multi-ethnic and multi-religious, with considerable non-Muslim populations of 19.8% of Buddhists, 9.2% Christians, 6.3% of Hindus, and 3.4% of the others (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2010; Mohd Nazir 2016). These social and cultural characteristics of Malaysia make it difficult to generalize the findings to other Muslim countries that are more culturally homogeneous.

Human capital is a key asset in the development of civilization. In accordance with his duties as caliph, people need to be molded through integrated and holistic approach emphasizing the development of knowledge, personality, religion and moral values. Human capital which complements this feature enables the transformation of individuals, families, communities and countries gradually.

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